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IV.

DISCIPLINE IN AMERICAN COLLEGES.

IN consequence of a number of student-outbreaks, some of which have been covered up, while others have been exposed to view in order to their repression, there is a considerable amount of undiscerning interest taken at this present time in the discipline of American colleges. People who have not concerned themselves with the progress which our best colleges have been making of late years in advancing culture and learning are dreadfully agitated with fears that our young are being trained to disorders, and that lives are in danger—the simple truth being that certain colleges are bent at all hazards on repressing lawlessness. I have before me, while I write, dozens of newspapers discussing the subject of college-government with hot eagerness, most of them with visible ignorance (which is sometimes as visible as darkness), and without any supererogatory wisdom. Everybody is crying out, like the crowd when a fire is raging: “Let us do something; the flame is spreading!” Most of the articles condemn the colleges, and do not propose a remedy, as they evidently do not know of any. Others have a recipe got up on the instant. A contagious disease has broken out, and one after another comes with his medicines, most of them of an obviously quack character, and none of them yet patented. Some are shouting, “Let the civil authorities put down the evil by prosecutions such as have been used against the ku-klux, the railway-laborers, and the Molly Maguire associations!” Others are demanding of the college faculties that they awake from their somnolence, and suspend, dismiss, and expel, till there is no evil left (and no good)—*atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem adpellant*. It has to be added that there are among us a few laughing philosophers, as knowing as Democritus, who wonder what all this is about, and think it, upon the whole, best that students should strike, bruise,

haze, and shoot each other, as they choose, and that they will thereby acquire manliness. It may be well to speak when we can get a hearing. Our higher journals should be prepared to view things calmly and comprehensively, to condemn the evils, and suggest wise and practical means of remedying them.

It may serve a good purpose to look at what is done in certain European countries. Not that we can get many or any suggestions of a valuable character from these quarters. But we may discover the operation of certain tendencies which the universities of the Old World have yielded to, and which are already working in this country, and inquire whether we should encourage or resist them. Generally the tendency of the great European colleges is to relax discipline more and more, and not to meddle with students unless they commit crimes or gross outrages of some kind.

The discipline of German universities is conducted on the principle of the selection of the fittest. The primary object of the university is to prepare civil servants for the state, be it in the church, in law, medicine, jurisprudence, or academic pursuits. If men are so weak as to yield to the ordinary temptations which surround them in their university life, they would sooner or later cause the state trouble in their professional career. Accordingly, the state, after exercising the most rigid discipline and painstaking care in the gymnasial education of its youth, at once, on their entering the university, strikes off the bonds of ordinary discipline, grants to the academic burgher a more than common degree of liberty, and virtually says: "You are subject, as long as you commit no crime, only to the laws and jurisdiction of the university of which you are a member. If you are drunken or riotous, you will be imprisoned in the university *carcer*; if you run in debt, you will be arrested, and examined before the university judge, and compelled to pay, but only according to your means; if you are guilty of any excess that approaches a crime, you will be examined before the university judge, and, according to his discretion, handed over to the civil authorities or not, as the case may be—in short, as long as you keep within the limits of academic discipline, you are in no wise subject to the civil law." The principal offenses of which a university court takes cognizance are: riotous conduct on the streets, for bad conduct

in the lecture-rooms is unknown ; debt and dueling, for which latter the *flotter bursch* still has, or must pretend to have, a hearty love. The punishment for the first and last of these offenses is imprisonment in the university jail for any period up to a month ; for debt, a virtual confiscation of funds—the judge decreeing that so much of a student's income shall go to pay his creditors, and so much to his own support. Drinking in private rooms, gambling, immoral conduct—in short, any offense which does not create a public scandal, all these receive no recognition whatever, as far as my experience goes, before the university court.

The administration of affairs is conducted by means of bea-dles, one of whom is on duty every night in every police-court of the university-town to take the numbers of the "legitimation-cards" which the offending students brought in by the police possess, or ought to possess, and then to set them free till summoned by the proper authorities. The faculty or senate of the university has absolutely nothing whatever to do with the administration of discipline, except, perhaps, to ratify the nomination which the government makes for the place of university judge.

There is little or nothing here worthy of being transplanted into America. Our republican spirit is jealous, very properly, of any class of men, students or others, being, so far as state offenses are concerned, under special government. The students in America are younger than those of Germany, and parents expect them to get a moral and a religious training such as is not likely to be had from a policeman or state officer of any kind. So we say in this country, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," and reserve for God and for the Church the things that are God's—all that has to do with conscience and with character. Some American State colleges need to be guarded against the temptation of giving up the moral training, without even seeking to bring in the civil control of the German universities.

In the two great English universities the students live, as a rule, in colleges (of which there are about twenty-three in Oxford and eighteen in Cambridge), and in halls, which have been springing up of late years. The teaching is by tutors, who give instruction to single students or to small companies, and is effective in producing accuracy, but wants class-stimulus to commonplace

minds. The student is handed over to a tutor, who is supposed to take charge of him, but commonly does little for his religious or moral training, which is, in fact, determined by himself and the spirit of the place. He has to attend prayers in the morning, and be in his room by nine o'clock at night. Otherwise he is not under very strict surveillance; he may do foolish acts in town, and drink wine with companions in his apartments. John Bull has a way of his own of enforcing such discipline as he chooses to exercise. At midnight or two in the morning you may see a don from the colleges—which take the duty by turns—with two huge men behind him, called “bull-dogs,” reconnoitring the streets and suspected houses, detecting transgressing students—which is more easily done because they are obliged to wear college costumes—taking down their names and colleges, and exposing them to rigid fines. The talk in the rooms is of the romance implied in dexterously escaping in the dog-hunt. There is not much here for American institutions to borrow: only, they might have an officer to watch those public-houses and drug-stores which make it their business to tempt and corrupt students in our college-towns; and it has been suggested that every youth entering college might be put specially under a professor or tutor to be his friend through his college course.

In the large Scottish colleges (Edinburgh has 2,300 students) the young men are allowed to do very much as they please, provided they prepare their tasks and behave themselves in the lecture-room, and do not come in collision with the police—which they are apt to do now and then, especially at snow-balling seasons, which are sure to turn into stone-throwing occasions, ending in arrests. A number of the parents who can afford it look out for a respectable domicile in which to board their sons, and there they have some oversight. But the great body of the students hire lodgings where they please, and are there under no control whatever. Most of them are moral and studious, but not a few sink into low habits and vice. The teaching is by professors (with assistants), who are commonly noted authors, and is ably conducted, and followed by examinations; but the classes are very large, and the lazy and idle are apt to escape heavy work, and are not caught even at a graduating examination, as many of them do not think it worth their while asking a degree.

In Dublin residence is not required, and a considerable number of students live at a distance, and go up to periodical examinations. But the body of the students live in college-rooms, and cannot be guilty of any great public outrage without being detected and punished. The teaching, as in the English universities, is mainly by tutors, and secures attention and fair scholarship, tested by examinations; but there is no such careful teaching in religion as we have in most American colleges.

The three Queen's Colleges in Ireland follow very much the Scottish system, with this difference—that every lodging-house has to be sanctioned by the college authorities, and each Christian denomination is entitled to have a dean, who gives some religious instruction, but cannot, in fact, look carefully after the morals of the scattered students, who are subjected to a rigid discipline in the college, but beyond are not under any special cognizance.

I need not describe, in contrast, the American system in an American periodical. I believe that the whole four hundred colleges which we have, happily or unhappily, profess to take a moral, most of them a religious, charge of their young men—in fact, coming *in loco parentis*. In the case of some, all this is nothing but a profession, and in such it were better that there should be no profession, that parents, anxious about their children, might make some other provision for their oversight. In a number, the guardianship extends no further than this, to secure that there are no disorders at the recitations or disgraceful scenes in the college-rooms and no outrages on the streets. But in the great body of the American colleges, male and female, there is a real oversight, moral and religious, of the students.

There may be colleges, but they are few, which are over-governed by masters who look as wise as Solomon, but whose judgments are not just so wise as his were. In some places there may be a harsh repression of natural impulses, and an intermeddling with joyousness and playfulness. I have known ministerial professors denounce infidelity till they made their best students infidel. The most effective means of making young men skeptics is for dull men to attack Darwin and Spencer, Huxley and Tyndall, without knowing the branches which these men have been turning to their own uses. There are grave professors who cannot

draw the distinction between the immorality of drinking and snowballing. It is true that we have two eyes given us that we may see, but we have also two eyelids to cover them up; and those who have oversight of young men should know when to open and when to close these organs of observation. I have seen a band of students dragging a horse, which had entered the campus, without matriculating, into a *goody*-student's room, and a professor with the scene before him determinedly turning his head now to the one side and now to the other that he might not possibly see it. I have witnessed a student coming out of a recitation-room, leaping into a wagon, whose driver had villainously disappeared, and careering along the road, while the president turned back from his walk that his eyes might not alight on so profane a scene.

Notwithstanding some incidental ills, I do believe that it is of advantage to have young men of sixteen, eighteen, or twenty, under some sort of oversight when they are away from home. I am convinced that professors and tutors, as a rule, have a kindly feeling toward the young men with whom they come into constant contact, and may, if they are made to feel that their duty requires, exercise a happy moral influence over them. I should deplore to find instructors settled on the understanding that they were simply to teach Latin or Greek, mathematics or metaphysics, and had no responsibility in regard to the formation of character and the kindling of spiritual aspirations. A good many years ago, about twenty-five young men of us went up from the "Land of Burns" to the University of Glasgow. It is one of the most painful recollections of my life that nearly one-half of these, cared for by nobody, fell before temptation to such vices as drinking, licentiousness, and gambling; and their teachers knew nothing about it. I remember how chilled I became at the coldness of a professor when I told him of it—he talked of it as a matter with which he had no concern. It is of moment that the instructors in a college be made to realize, what some very able teachers averse to the personal exercise of discipline are not willing to do, that they have a responsibility in regard to the conduct of the young men under them, as well as in regard to their scholarship. I verily believe that, in America, professors and tutors, as a rule, have a kindly feeling toward their

young men, indeed, at times, are apt—especially kind-hearted, evangelical ministers—to relax too speedily on a profession of repentance. The tutors may at times be too strict, for they have to keep up their authority; quite as frequently they are too lax themselves, for they have lately been students. The professors may seem to be awfully solemn, “with looks that threaten the profane,” but they are trying all the while to keep down a tender feeling within. In this connection it is important to remark that it is of advantage to have in a faculty a due admixture of old men and of young, the former to restrain both from too great and too small punishments, the latter to stimulate and to sympathize. I am convinced, also, from my experience in other countries as well as this, that it is expedient to have some ministers in the governing body, feeling a responsibility about the souls of their pupils, but also a number of laymen to relax their rigidity and give their discipline a human side. Without resorting to a spy system of looking through windows and key-holes—a system in which the governors are sure to be outwitted by their pupils—the instructors may find out, if they are faithful, when a young man is falling into negligence or vice, and may save him at the hour of temptation—in answer, it may be, to the prayers of a mother wrestling with God for him a thousand miles away.

It is a benefit to a young man far, it may be, from home, to find persons to take an interest in him, to sympathize with him when he has lost a mother or sister, or when his father has become bankrupt; to warn him when he is dancing on the edge of a precipice, and direct him to the best Teacher. I have wrought under both systems—the European and American—in the youngest of the British universities, and one of the older American colleges, and I am prepared to recommend that the Americans keep their method of religious instruction and moral watchfulness as long as they can, and watch and oppose all attempts, certain to be made mainly by professors averse to be troubled with any act of discipline, to undermine gradually, on one pretext or other, all formal supervision.

I feel constrained to add that no college discipline will succeed if merely of a restrictive or prohibitory character—there must be the play of higher agencies. The most essential secu-

lar power in preventing college mischief is, undoubtedly, a well-organized system of instruction, whereby the students are kept busy from day to day. I have implicit faith in the old grandmother-sentiment, even though the old grandmother seldom has courage to put it in operation—that, “next to the grace of God, the most powerful means of keeping young men moral is to keep them occupied.” In the younger classes the pupils should be trained to regular habits by constantly required and recurring work, and liability to be called up any day or any hour; and for this purpose skillful professors (and not mere tutors, who should, however, also be employed) should be multiplied so as to break down large classes into divisions of twenty or twenty-five. In the upper classes there should not be a necessity for such a breaking up into parts; indeed, there may be a stimulating effect produced by the very largeness of the class and the variety of talent in it, only there should be frequent recitations and searching examinations. I am glad to see that Harvard has declared that its experiment, of making attendance on recitations by the Senior Class voluntary, has not been successful; it was an imitation of the German system, without the severe check of the bureau-examination, which opens up valuable civil offices to those who pass it. Higher than all this, the teachers must be men in advance of their age in their departments, and capable of interesting their pupils because interested themselves in their work. The great teachers I have known have all been enthusiasts. The Americans beat all other nations in practical inventions; they have formed instruments which can speak and hear, but they have not yet constructed a machine that can teach. I can conceive, indeed, that there are States in the Union which, when they have run in debt by political jobbery, will begin to economize in education, by having a central station where one teacher can, through the telephone, put his questions simultaneously to ten thousand pupils. But this perfect mechanical age has not yet come. Hitherto fire has had to be kindled by fire. The latest science has not been able to show that life can be produced except by life. Along with the severer studies, the grave board of trustees might expediently lay out some of its funds in providing entertainments, such as music and gymnastics, to keep the young men at their relaxation hours from baser amusements.

But, to supplement not supersede all these means, there is need of discipline in every college. Of those who imagine that a father or a college can dispense with this, we simply say that they are ignorant of what human nature is, and may have to be taught it by sad experience, by the lamentable fall of a son or a promising youth who might have been saved. The college faculty must insist on their right to institute investigations. A father has the power of inquiring into the conduct or misconduct of his children. A master, the head of a store or factory, has surely the right of determining whether those employed by him have or have not fallen into thieving or intemperance. On a like principle the president and faculty may and should take an oversight of the doings of their students. True, there are limits to their prerogative. Masters and professors must carefully avoid conducting their investigations so as to damage the character of those under them, or expose them to a criminal process. The man of sense and good feeling will instinctively stop at the point at which he would be likely to injure any one, and will commonly be able to find enough of evidence to secure the only end he has in view, to determine what should be his own conduct toward those under his care; that is, to determine whether he should admonish, deprive of privileges, or dismiss those who have offended.

The college faculties have only a limited means of obtaining evidence—I know excellent lawyers who cannot make allowance for this. According to the college code of honor, more binding than state or even divine law, it is held to be unpardonable for one student to inform against another. In the naval and military academies, as in courts of law, every student is required to testify as to what he has witnessed, so far as he may be asked. But in a college such a proceeding would not be tolerated. This is so far a weakness and a hinderance. But I am inclined to think that upon the whole it is better that faculties should not have the power of enforcing evidence. The very fact that they are thus restricted enables them to act as a father, and to insist on having acknowledgments and confession which will commonly be given to a president or professor who has in any measure the confidence of a student, when it would be studiously withheld from a court of law.

The faculties are also restricted as to the penalties they can impose. They have not a prison, like the German universities. Except for the destruction of college property, they do not impose pecuniary penalties, as the English universities do—such penalties, unless they be imposed unequally, bear hard on the poor, and scarcely affect the rich. What power, it may be asked, have they left them? They have the power of imposing disorder-marks, and making these reduce the grades, a penalty felt by all good students, but not felt, it is to be admitted, by those who have sunk so low that they have no ambition to rise. They have the most important power, which most American colleges use, and most European colleges do not, of reporting regularly and on all needful occasions to parents and guardians. They have also the equally important power of sending home offenders to their homes to be dealt with. I have found that, in nine cases out of ten, when faculties and fathers combine and pursue the same firm but kind course, the wayward student is reclaimed—which I may add is almost never the case when fathers join their sons in resisting the faculty. These, with the power of suspension and dismissal, are commonly sufficient to sustain the authority of the faculty. As to expulsion, I believe that there are grievous cases in which it would be resorted to. But I have never known it to be imposed in any college with which I have been connected, and I hope never to be required to inflict it.

The colleges should avow, and the public should be assured, that the civil authorities have rights and corresponding duties in regard to all members of colleges. It is not to be tolerated that it should be claimed for students that they are a privileged class, beyond civil prosecutions. There are colleges in the Old World, and there are (or were) colleges in America, which have an exclusive jurisdiction in regard to ordinary offenses even beyond the college walls. It is, I think, better in every way that our schools and colleges have no such prerogative, which is contrary to the genius of our institutions, and might lead to abuses in the way of excusing culprits. It is a wholesome thing that students should feel that, like others, they are under the law of the land, and that they are liable to be punished if they commit a criminal offense. It is not only desirable, but a necessity, and a duty, that the civil authorities should in certain cases interfere promptly

and decisively. Wherever any student is seriously hurt, the civil authorities are bound to defend him. Whenever students attack the persons or houses of citizens living beyond the college precincts, the police should act instantly and effectively, as they would in the case of others committing a like offense. Only thus can the college-town be secured against the attacks and insults of a few vulgar and cunning fellows who may contrive to conceal their misdeeds from their professors—left without the power of compelling evidence.

There is little or no risk of the criminal authorities interposing too often, or pronouncing too severe sentences. The tendency is all the other way. American colleges are often situated in villages, and the best people, including the magistrates and storekeepers, are not inclined to punish students, partly because they have an affection for the youths, and partly because they are afraid of a retaliation. The quarrels between “town and gown” are confined to the lowest rabble, and are abhorrent to the respectable citizens. Even in larger cities, where the students do not form so important an element, the disposition will be to wink at offenses committed by youths acting under mere impulse.

What, then, should the public, in its present interested and excited state, demand?

1. It should insist on the civil authorities doing their duty. I do not propose that they should appear on the occasion of every college *émeute*. But wherever there is interference with the inherent rights of man, or serious injury done to person or property, the magistrate has to fulfill his functions, and be “a terror to evil-doers, and a praise and protection to such as do well.”

But I do not expect much, after all, from these civil prosecutions. There will always be a feeling for generous (supposed to be) young men, and a disposition to palliate their offenses. The prosecutors may make a show of activity and zeal, but will in fact do little. There will often be a lack of forthcoming evidence, and not unfrequently the wrong persons will be charged. The marshal or constable may on some pretext or other allow an escape, and the magistrate impose a mere nominal penalty. The accused will get friends to engage a plausible lawyer for the defense, and he will resort to all sorts of quirks, take advantage of mistakes, and in the end persuade the jury that the whole was

a piece of innocent college fun and frivolity. Some portions of the public press have been clamorously demanding the prosecution of hazing students. Let them mark how many, or it may turn out how few, of the prosecutions now instituted are successful. As not believing in the great efficacy of civil prosecutions, the public should look to another quarter for an effective remedy to the evil.

2. The college authorities must be required to do their duty, and be sustained and strengthened while they do so.

It is certain that there are old college customs still lingering in our country which people generally are now anxious to be rid of. Some of them are offsets of the abominable practices of old English schools, and have come down from colonial days, through successive generations. Thus American hazing is a modification of English faggging. It seems that there are still some who defend or palliate the crime—for such it is. They say that it stirs up courage and promotes manliness. But I should like to know what courage there is in a crowd, in masks at the dead of night, attacking a single youth who is gagged and is defenseless! It is not a fair and open fight in which both parties expose themselves to danger. The deed, so far from being courageous, is about the lowest form of cowardice. The preparations made and the deeds done are in all cases mean and dastardly, and in some horrid. I have seen the apparatus. There are masks for concealment, and gags to stop the mouth and ears; there is a razor and there are scissors, there are ropes to bind, and in some cases whips or boards to inflict blows; there are commonly filthy applications ready, and in all cases unmanly insults more difficult to be borne by a youth of spirit than any beating. The practice, so far from being humanizing, is simply brutalizing in its influence on all engaged in it. It does not form the brave man, but the bully. The youth exposed to the indignity this year is prepared to revenge it on another next year. A gentleman, who knows American colleges well, tells me that in those in which hazing is common in the younger classes the very look of the students is rowdyish. It is astonishing that the American people, firm enough when they are roused, should have allowed this barbarity to linger in our colleges, great and small, down to the last quarter of the nineteenth century of the religion of purity and love.

I am so glad that public sentiment is now turned toward it and so far against it! It is of vast importance that it be rightly directed. The opportunity should not be allowed to pass away without improving it so as to be rid of the evil forever. It is well known by all knowing ones that in certain colleges the practice is very common; nearly every freshman is exposed to an indignity, it may be very small, of some kind. But parents are kept in ignorance of it. The college is in a quiet locality, and the most wide-awake reporter does not hear of the deed. There are other places in which the noise is heard. But the college cries: "Hush! hush! It will lessen our students, it will stop the flow of our funds."

The duty of the college authorities is clear. And let the public keep them to it. Let them not try to conceal the disease, but let them resolve on curing it, even though it should thereby have to come forth to view. Which sort of colleges is to be blamed, those which proceed to extinguish the fire, it may be by floods and amid hissing, or those which allow it to smoulder from year to year, ready to burst out at any time? According to the answer given to this question, is the prospect of having the evil rooted out.

Much of what I have said about hazing applies to secret societies. I admit that some of these societies set before them a good end. But they promote it by unbecoming means when worthy means are available and might be far more effective. They foster in youth, when character is formed, a habit of underhand action and underground procedure which are apt to go through life. It should be one of the aims of our higher educational institutions, not only to make scholars, but to rear open and manly character. There will always be a temptation and a tendency on the part of these secret organizations to meddle with college management, to thwart certain of the plans of the college authorities, and to influence the election to college honors. It is difficult to get proof where men are bound to secrecy, but we have the published testimonies of eminent men that the social meetings held by these societies often tempt young men to drinking. Nearly every professor I meet with acknowledges that these societies have an influence for evil. But they are afraid to meet them, are more afraid of these earth-hidden mud-works than they would be of

castles of stone above-ground. This evil will not be stopped till the public demand its removal.

The public is at present inclined to condemn the evil practices. But there is a risk that the efforts to cast out the virus will be sporadic, one college making a weak attempt at one time, and another at another, no one assisting his neighbor, some rather profiting by their neighbors' difficulties, and "fishing in troubled waters." The remedy lies with the public, which can stop the mischief as soon as it is in earnest, and says so.

JAMES McCOSH.